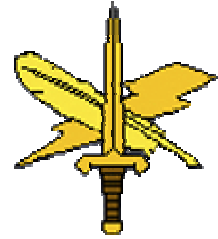




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HOWARD CALLED FORT HOME FOR 6 YEARS

By Anna Morelock
Staff writer

Col. Bart Howard has called Fort Riley home for almost six years, but he will be moving to a new assignment as chief of staff for Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan this month.

Howard first came to Fort Riley in 2000 when he became commander of 1st Battalion, 34th Armor, in the 1st Brigade. He was fortunate, Howard said, to remain at Fort Riley and be the 24th Infantry Division (Mech) G3. Howard handed over command of the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, to Col. Jeff D. Ingram May 3.

“So, 1st Bde. and Fort Riley are really a home for us now in the U.S. Army,” he said. While on assignment in Afghanistan, Howard’s wife, Teresa, and their son, Conner, will remain at Fort Riley.

While at Fort Riley, Howard has taken a special interest in the history of the post, but also of the Devil Brigade, the oldest brigade in the Army. “Some of the units in the 1st Bde. were the oldest in the entire army – Hamilton’s own is one example, 230 years old,” he mentioned.

Howard said that he realized while studying the unit’s history that many of the challenges the brigade met weren’t new at all, and he hoped the Soldiers could benefit from that knowledge.

“I realized that there was a theme of continuity that what these Soldiers had done before, 230 years ago, facing adversity, facing changes, that our Soldiers could perhaps get some inspiration that it had happened before,” he said. “There was a theme there, and I wanted Soldiers to also be proud of their unit. That patch means a lot to me and hopefully to young Soldiers just coming in.”

During his time with the brigade, Howard and the “Devil Brigade” Soldiers met many challenges and they always stepped up, he said.

“The biggest challenge in the last year and a half since I’ve been in 1st Bde. is change and rapid change,” Howard said. It’s been the most rapid change that he’s ever seen in the Army, he said.

“Our mission continually evolved, not because of mistakes or errors, but just because of such rapid changes in Iraq and the war on terror that we were asked to adapt very quickly.”

Just a few weeks before deploying to Iraq, the brigade got news the deployment would be delayed. “That was good news for our families,” he said, “but then we quickly had to adapt to what the next was.”

Next was training companies for security missions, and the brigade adapted to that, he said. Then the Soldiers were given the mission to change unit organization to be able to train advisory teams, and they met all those challenges.

Before, Howard said, a year’s calendar could be laid out without too many changes, now it changes constantly.

During his command, one thing didn’t change for Howard: the opportunity for him to connect with Soldiers. Before he left, Howard made a stop at each company.

“It meant a lot to me to be able to talk to every Soldier in small groups and thank them for what they do on a day to day level,” he said. “That’s what you appreciate when you’re in command, that you have that contact with Soldiers.”

Howard said he remembers being a private in the National Guard and having no idea who the senior leaders were. “I kind of realize today that Soldiers do a lot of things that they may believe are not seen, just some little function they’re told to,” he said. “But ... everything’s important. If your mission for that day is to set up a camo net over a water point, then that’s pretty important. That’s what we need you to do. Everybody’s got that different level of responsibility, but they’re all important”

Howard said he’s excited for the challenges that lie ahead for him in Afghanistan, but he’ll miss the community feeling he’s known at Fort Riley.

“Fort Riley still has the feel of a smaller home town,” he said. “I’ve been on installations before where it’s so large you just don’t know all your neighbors....”